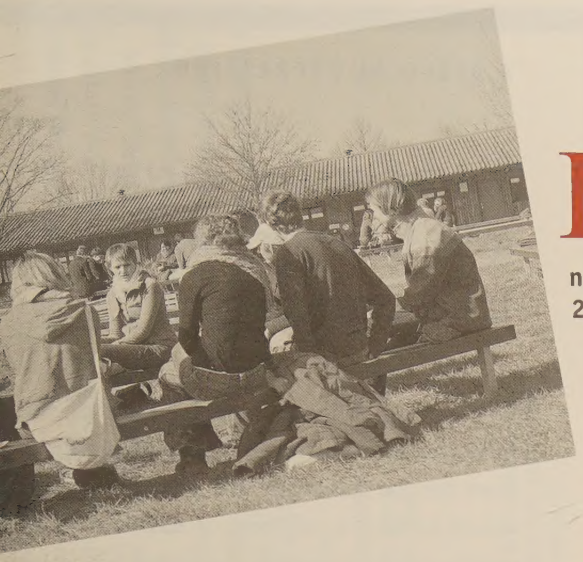

Letter from Taizé

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Solidarity with All Creation

At the Berlin meeting, Brother Alois invited young people to think together about possible paths "towards a new solidarity." In recent weeks, at Taizé, a workshop brought together volunteers and young visitors around a variation of this theme: "Solidarity with all creation: the responsibility of Christians for the world of tomorrow." This issue of the *Letter from Taizé* echoes these exchanges: young people who took part in this workshop, and others too, provide insights from their personal experiences. On the inside pages, we go further with this same topic, with a meditation on the text of Isaiah 41 and a reflective piece on the idea of "ruling over the earth" in the Bible. Finally, an answer is given to the question: "If we believe in eternal life, why be interested in the fate of our planet?"

For a new solidarity among human beings to spring up at all levels—in families, communities, towns and villages, between countries and continents—courageous decisions are needed. Aware of the perils and the suffering that weigh upon humanity and the planet, we do not want to give in to fear and resignation. (Brother Alois, Letter 2012 – *Towards a New Solidarity*)

Daniel (Costa Rica)

Everything created has been a gift for women and men, which God has made us responsible for. For me, this means that I am a co-creator, that I am responsible for what happens to it: my actions will affect each one of God's works. And this commits me to respect, to care for God's creation and the need to make it last. Submerged in a world that is constantly telling us about the consequences of climate change, there must arise in us a warning, an alert: What am I doing? What can I do?

For example, in my community we have a couple of big barrels where we can deposit recyclables, so we can promote conservation. Also, I try to spend less time in the shower, in order to preserve water. There is no need to do big things, we can also take small steps and make changes and raise awareness among those around us. Each part of God's work has something of him in it, and in his creation I have learned to find him. So, this makes me want to make a change my way of viewing what is around me, trying harder to take care of it, and to love it more each day.

Paulina (Poland)

For me being a part of God's creation is not only a call to gratitude for the gift of life, but also a commitment to environmental care. The gesture of God's presenting all the animals to the first man (Genesis 2:19-20) I understand as an encouragement to learn about other creatures, but also to take responsibility for them. I find it a very important dimension of human dignity and I think we should talk more about this component of our Christian vocation.

I often feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the harm that humanity is causing. It is difficult for me to watch animals treated as objects or to see a damaged or littered landscape. It makes me downhearted and I wonder what I can do to minimize it. I try to make responsible choices in my daily life—when I do the shopping, travel or spend my holidays. I know I cannot save all of nature myself, but this does not relieve me of responsibility.

Charles (India)

Today, the world is threatened by global warming. In order to prevent climate change on the earth, everyone can take the decision to preserve nature in a practical way. Planting a tree is hardly more than a drop of water on a dried up ground, but if everyone on earth did it, it would be enough to protect the climate from too much carbon-dioxide in the atmosphere. As Mahatma Gandhi advised: if you cut a tree, you should plant two trees to compensate for the damage.

Rich countries, blessed in natural resources, will always have enough water to drink and to use for hygienic needs. But there are places on the earth where people have to wait patiently for water. Sometimes, the water supply works just at a particular time, and water has to be reserved for bad times. Sometimes, there is just a common water-tap or a common channel to support a particular location and its population with water, and people have to line up for water during a long time. Stopping the waste of water, even though we have enough, would be one step towards preserving nature.

Duarte (Portugal)

For me, having faith is about being able to recognize God's presence in everything that exists. It means being able to see the

Continued on last page

LISTENING TO THE WORD

Dwelling in God's Garden

The poor and needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. But I, the Lord, will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs. I will put in the desert the cedar and the acacia, the myrtle and the olive. I will set junipers in the wasteland, the fir and the cypress together, so that people may see and know, may consider and understand, that the hand of the Lord has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has created it. (Isaiah 41:17-20)

The poor and the needy who search for water are the Israelites deported to Babylon. To return to their land, a formidable road through the desert lies before them. God assures them of his presence: "I will not forsake them."

But how does God help them? In the previous chapter, we learn that God prepares a road in the wilderness and gives strength to the weak. Here, the prophet announces something still more astonishing: God will change the desert into an oasis so that the captives may return with joy, without any difficulties.

God likes to make rivers flow and to plant trees; he has done this ever since he planted a garden in Eden, the paradise with its four rivers (Genesis 2). This time, he opens springs of water and plants seven kinds of trees, with the olive-tree, the most noble of all, in the fourth position at the center of the list.

God wants everybody to see this new paradise. But what can really be seen, and by whom? If wellsprings had indeed gushed forth miraculously and trees had blossomed beside the road of the Israelites—and even "clapped their hands" as the people passed by, as is said later on (Isaiah 55:12)—some traces of this should have been found in the historical books.

The poetry of these verses calls for a less literal, more subtle interpretation. The point is in the conclusion, which says that God created all this. God saves his people by creating. So then the opposite is true, too: God creates for the sake of saving. "The creatures of the world are salvific" (Wisdom 1:14).

The wilderness that God turns into an oasis is not only the desert between Babylon and Jerusalem, but the entire earth inhabited by human beings. All are invited to understand that the pleasing beauty of our earth is much more than a decoration; it is God's loving-kindness. Salvation is not found by escaping from it, by leaving the world, but by dwelling in God's garden like poor people whose hunger is satisfied.

- **Where do I see or recognize God at work to come and assist us? Do I see it especially within me and others, or also in the creation around us: the springs, the trees...?**
- **If God saves by creating and if creation is the bearer of salvation, what attitude towards creatures are we called to have?**

A BIBLICAL EXPRESSION

"Subdue the earth and have dominion over its creatures"

Centuries of unbridled exploitation of the ea primarily by countries of Christian tradition, r fears for the future of our planet. In seeking causes of such a calamity, it has become almo commonplace to accuse the Judeo-Christian tr tion. In this regard, mention is often made of end of the first creation story at the beginning of Bible:

God said, "Let us make humankind in our im according to our likeness; and let them *have domin* over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps u the earth." (...) And God said to them, "Be frui and multiply, and fill the earth and *subdue it*; and *h dominion* over the fish of the sea and over the bird the air and over every living thing that moves upon earth." (Genesis 1:26,28 NRSV)

The two underlined verbs seem to give human ings permission to treat nature in whatever way t wish. There is apparently no need to live in harm with the earth and all the animals and plants w share it with us; the material world is merely material to fulfill the mad dreams of a sorcerer's prentice, a humanity cut off from its roots. Is suc view really in conformity with the biblical messa or is it a perversion of it? Let us look more closel the expressions in question.

First, the word translated as "to have domini (NRSV, AV) or "to rule over" (NIV), *radah* in H brew. It is true that it appears once in the Bible w the meaning "to trample, crush," in a description God's judgment as a grape-harvest (Joel 3:13). all the other uses of this verb do not permit us attribute a purely negative meaning to it. The r means rather "to reign, to exercise power or auth ity over," without specifying the way in which t authority is exercised.

On the one hand, when used unjustly, by "th who hate you" (Leviticus 26:17), "by the hands [one's] enemies" (Nehemiah 9:28), the use of po leads to enslavement. Some rule "harshly and b tally" (Ezekiel 34:4) or "in anger" (Isaiah 14: A just authority, however, is beneficial. Solom

MAY

DAILY READINGS

Holy Spirit, always present in our hearts: you invite us to be transparent, simple and selfless, like a springtime in flower. And may God's joy touch the very depths of our soul.

1 Ps 119:81-88
Tue All your commands are trustworthy, Lord; help me, for I am persecuted without cause. True to your faithful love, give me life.

2 Rm 8:18-25
Wed All creation retains the hope of being freed from its slavery to corruption in order to enter the glorious freedom of the children of God.

3 Mt 13:44-52
Thu Jesus said: The kingdom of heaven is like a trader looking for precious pearls, who on finding one of great value, goes, sells everything he has and buys it.

4 Ps 142
Fri I pour out my troubles to the Lord. I cry out to you, Lord, and affirm, "You are my refuge, my share in the land of the living."

5 Mk 11:22-25
Sat Jesus said: When you pray, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, and your Father in heaven will forgive your sins.

6 Jn 15:1-8
SUN If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit and be my disciples.

7 Ga 6:1-10
Mon Bear each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.

8 Is 25:1-5
Tue Lord, you have been a refuge for the weak, a shelter for the needy in distress.

9 Mt 6:7-15
Wed Jesus said: Some think that by using many words in their prayer, they will make themselves heard. Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

10 2 Co 1:18-24
Thu Paul explained his ministry, saying: We do not want to be masters of your faith, but fellow workers with you for your joy.

11 Ph 1:27-30
Fri Paul writes to the Philippians: Stand firm in one spirit. You have been granted the privilege, not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well.

12 Si 7:32-36
Sat Give generously to the poor. Let your generosity extend to all the living. Do not turn your back on those who weep.

13 Jn 15:15-17
SUN Jesus said to his disciples: I no longer call you servants, for a servant does not know his master's business. I call you friends, because everything I have learnt from my Father I have made known to you.

14 Mi 6:6-8
Mon This is what the Lord wants of you, only this: to act justly, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.

15 Lk 14:25-33
Tue Jesus said: Anyone who comes to me without preferring me to their father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and their own life too, cannot be my disciple.

16 Rm 13:8-10
Wed All the commandments can be summed up in this: Love your neighbour as yourself.

17 Ep 4:11-16
Thu ASCENSION
The body of Christ is being built until we all reach unity in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God.

18 Mt 9:36—10:8
Fri Jesus sent out his twelve disciples, saying: Proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is close at hand. Freely you have received, freely give.

19 Ac 1:6-11
Sat Jesus, risen from the dead, said to his disciples: You will receive the power of the Holy Spirit which will come on you, and then you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth.

20 Jn 17:1-11
SUN Jesus prayed to his Father for his disciples, saying: Keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one as we are one.

21 Ph 2:1-11
Mon Paul writes: Be one in love, one in heart and one in mind; do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit.

22 1 Co 6:14-20
Tue Paul writes: Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you and whom you received from God.

23 Gn 2:5-9
Wed God fashioned man, he breathed a breath of life into his nostrils and man became a living being.

24 Ps 4
Thu Many keep saying, "Who will give us happiness?" Lord, let the light of your face shine upon us.

25 Ep 4:1-7
Fri With all humility, gentleness and patience, bear with one another in love. Take every care to maintain the unity of the Spirit by the bond of peace.

26 Ezk 36:24-27
Sat God says: I will give you a new heart. I will remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh. I shall put my Spirit in you.

27 Jn 15:18-27
SUN PENTECOST
Jesus told his disciples: When the Spirit of truth comes, who issues from the Father, he will bear witness to me.

28 1 Co 1:10-13
Mon May there be no divisions among you. Be closely united in mind and thought.

29 1 Tm 4:12-16
Tue Paul writes to Timothy: You have in you a spiritual gift which was given to you. Do not neglect it.

30 1 Tm 2:1-8
Wed God wants all people to be saved and to reach full knowledge of the truth.

31 Is 12:1-6
Thu Sing of the Lord, for his works are great: make them known throughout the world. Cry out for joy, for God is among you in his greatness.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

JUNE

DAILY READINGS

1 Rm 4:18-25
Fri St. Paul writes: Though there seemed to be no hope, Abraham hoped and believed, being fully convinced that God is able to do what he has promised.

2 Ph 3:7-14
Sat Paul writes: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

3 Mt 28:16-20
SUN Jesus said to his disciples: All authority in heaven and on earth has been given me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.

4 Jn 14:1-12
Mon Jesus said to his disciples: In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.

5 2 Co 8:7-15
Tue Be generous, for you know the generosity of our Lord Jesus Christ who became poor for your sake.

6 Jn 7:25-30
Wed Jesus said: I am not here on my own, but the one who sent me is true. I know him because I am from him and he sent me.

7 Jn 3:13-17
Thu God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

8 Col 1:15-20
Fri God wanted all his fullness to dwell in Christ, and through him to reconcile all things to himself.

9 Heb 12:1-2
Sat Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, to run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection.

10 Mk 14:12-26
SUN During the Passover meal with his disciples, Jesus took bread, and when he had said the blessing he broke it and gave it to them, saying: Take this; this is my body.

11 Lk 9:46-48
Mon Jesus said: Anyone who welcomes a little child in my name welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me.

12 Mk 6:30-44
Tue Jesus and his disciples went to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. From every town, people hurried to the place and reached it before them. Seeing the large crowd, Jesus had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

13 Ws 1:11-15
Wed God did not make death and takes no pleasure in the destruction of the living. God created all things for life.

14 Mk 16:15-20
Thu After Jesus' Ascension, the disciples went out and proclaimed the Gospel everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word.

15 Ps 18
Fri God brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he loves me.

16 Ep 5:8-14
Sat You are light in the Lord. Live as children of light; for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth.

17 Mk 4:26-29
SUN Jesus said: The kingdom of God is like this: A person scatters seed on the land. Night and day, while they sleep and when they are awake, the seed sprouts and grows, they do not know how.

18 Ac 17:22-28
Mon Paul said: In God we live and move and have our being.

19 Ex 4:10-17
Tue Moses said to God, "I am not good with words." But God said to him, "Go now. I shall help you speak and teach you what to say."

20 Ep 2:19-22
Wed You are built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone.

21 1 S 16:1-13
Thu The Lord said to Samuel: Take no notice of appearance. God does not see as human beings see: they look at appearances but God looks at the heart.

22 Lk 17:20-21
Fri Jesus said: The coming of the kingdom of God cannot be observed, for the kingdom of God is among you.

23 Lk 9:18-24
Sat Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God."

24 Ac 13:22-26
SUN St JOHN THE BAPTIST John the Baptist prepared the coming of Jesus by proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the whole people.

25 Ps 142
Mon You are my refuge, Lord, my share in the land of the living.

26 Ac 4:32-34
Tue All the first Christians were one in heart and mind. No one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but they shared everything they had.

27 Jn 6:41-47
Wed Jesus said: It is written in the prophets, "They will all be taught by God." Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me.

28 Mt 11:25-30
Thu Jesus said: Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

29 Mt 16:13-20
Fri SS PETER AND PAUL Peter said to Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, for this was not revealed to you by any human, but by my Father in heaven."

30 Rv 22:16-21
Sat The Risen Jesus says: I am the bright morning star. Let all who are thirsty come; let whoever wishes take the water of life as a gift.

God of love, when we ask you what you expect of us, we realize that you call us to be a reflection of your presence.

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JULY

DAILY READINGS

1 Mk 5:21-43
SUN To a man who had been told that his daughter was dead, Jesus said: "Do not be afraid, only have faith." Later, taking the child by the hand he said to her, "Talitha kum!" which means, "Little girl, get up!" And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about.

2 Lk 18:15-17
Mon Jesus said: Anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.

3 Si 28:2-7
Tue St THOMAS Forgive your neighbour any wrongs done to you, and when you pray your sins will be forgiven.

4 1 P 3:8-17
Wed Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. Instead, repay with a blessing, for to this you were called.

5 Mt 18:12-14
Thu Jesus said: If a shepherd finds one sheep that was lost, it gives him more joy than ninety-nine others that did not stray at all. In the same way, your Father in heaven does not want even one to be lost.

6 Mt 9:10-13
Fri Jesus said: I desire mercy, not sacrifice. Indeed, I have come not to call the just, but sinners.

7 Mk 8:34-37
Sat Jesus said: If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let them renounce themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

8 Mk 6:1-6
SUN Jesus came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this?"

9 Lk 6:12-19
Mon At that time, Jesus went up into the hills to pray and he spent the whole night praying to God.

10 Ph 4:4-7
Tue Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.

11 Jr 17:5-8
Wed The person who trusts in the Lord is like a tree planted by the water: in a year of drought it is untroubled and never ceases to bear fruit.

12 Dt 30:11-14
Thu God's Word is very near to you, it is on your lips and in your heart for you to put it into practice.

13 Ph 3:17—4:1
Fri Paul writes: Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. So then, my dear brothers and friends, stand firm in the Lord.

14 Ep 5:1-4,8-11
Sat Paul writes: Be imitators of God, as beloved children, and follow Christ by loving as he loved you, giving himself up for us.

15 Mk 6:7-13
SUN Calling the Twelve apostles to him, Jesus sent them out two by two. And they went preaching the need to change one's heart and they drove out many evil spirits.

16 Lk 12:22-31
Mon Jesus said: Seek first God's Kingdom, and all other things will be given to you as well.

17 Ph 2:1-4
Tue Paul writes: Do nothing out of selfish ambition, look not to your own interests but to those of others.

18 Ws 11:21-26
Wed You are merciful to all, Lord, because you are almighty. You love everything that exists.

19 Col 1:15-23
Thu Paul writes: Persevere, standing firm on the solid base of faith, without drifting away from the hope held out by the Gospel.

20 Ph 3:4-14
Fri Paul writes: I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the communion in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so somehow to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

21 Ezk 11:17-20
Sat The Lord says: I will give an undivided heart to my people. I will put a new spirit in them.

22 Mk 6:30-34
SUN When Jesus saw the large crowd, he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he began to teach them at length.

23 Dt 4:29-31
Mon The Lord your God is a merciful God who will not forsake you.

24 2 Co 5:16-21
Tue St. Paul writes: In the name of Christ we appeal to you to be reconciled to God.

25 2 Co 4:7-12
Wed St JAMES
We carry the treasure of the light of Christ in earthen vessels so that it may be quite clear that the radiance comes from God, not from us.

26 Ex 22:20-21
Thu The Lord says to his people: Do not mistreat or oppress the strangers in your midst, for you too were once strangers in the land of Egypt.

27 Rm 14:13-19
Fri Paul writes: Let us stop judging one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any obstacle in the way of another.

28 1 Ch 29:10-20
Sat David prayed saying: Everything comes from you, our God, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. We are guests before you and passing visitors on this earth.

29 Jn 6:1-15
SUN After the people saw Jesus feed the crowd, they began to say: "Surely this is the prophet who is to come into the world." Jesus, realizing that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, withdrew to the hills again, alone.

30 Jn 5:30-47
Mon Jesus said: I seek to do not my own will, but the will of the one who sent me.

31 Jm 1:16-21
Tue Be quick to listen, but slow to speak and slow to become angry, for human anger does not bring about God's justice.

Bless us, God of life, and bless those you have entrusted to us. Keep us in the spirit of the Beatitudes – joy, simplicity and mercy.

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AUGUST

DAILY READINGS

1 Jn 8:31-36
Wed Jesus said: If you make my word your home, you will indeed be my disciples. You will come to know the truth and the truth will set you free.

2 Lk 6:46-49
Thu Jesus said: Whoever comes to me, listens to my words and acts on them is like someone building a house who digs down deep and lays the foundations on rock.

3 Ph 3:1-9
Fri Paul writes: For Christ I have accepted the loss of all other things — I look on them as rubbish so that I may gain Christ and be found in him.

4 Mt 18:1-10
Sat Jesus called a little child to him and said: See that you do not look down on one of these little ones, for I tell you that their angels in heaven are continually in the presence of my Father in heaven.

5 Jn 6:28-35
SUN Jesus said: I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

6 2 P 1:19-21
Mon TRANSFIGURATION You do well to pay attention to the word of the prophets, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

7 Jn 4:5-42
Tue Jesus said: Anyone who drinks the water I give will never be thirsty again. The water I give them will become a spring of water within them, welling up to eternal life.

8 Zc 8:16-19
Wed The Lord says to his people: Within your gates render judgments that are true and make for peace. Yes, love truth and peace.

9 1 Co 10:23-31
Thu Let no one seek their own interest, but rather the good of others. Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

10 Jm 5:13-20
Fri Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed.

11 Mt 10:1-16
Sat Jesus said: Look, I am sending you out like sheep among wolves; so be as shrewd as snakes and yet innocent as doves.

12 Jn 6:47-51
SUN Jesus said: I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.

13 Is 42:1-7
Mon The Lord says to his servant: I have called you in righteousness. I will take you by the hand and shape you. I will make you a light to the nations.

14 2 Tm 1:6-11
Tue Paul writes to Timothy: Share in my sufferings for the Gospel, relying on the power of God who has saved us and called us to be holy.

15 Lk 1:39-45
Wed THE VIRGIN MARY When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb."

16 1 Co 13:1-13
Thu Paul writes: Even if I can understand all mysteries and know all things, even if I have the faith to move mountains, if I am without love I am nothing.

17 Jn 6:41-51
Fri Jesus said: No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day.

18 1 Co 7:29-31
Sat Paul writes: From now on those who buy something should live as if they had no possessions and those who use the things of the world should do so without being engrossed in them. Because this world as we know it is passing away.

19 Jn 6:51-58
SUN Jesus said: Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.

20 Ws 3:1-9
Mon Those who trust in the Lord will understand the truth. Those who are faithful will live with him in love.

21 Mk 8:34-38
Tue Jesus said: Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the Gospel will save it.

22 Si 2:1-9
Wed You who revere the Lord, wait for his mercy. Do not turn aside from him.

23 Jn 14:21-26
Thu Jesus said: The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you.

24 Ph 4:4-7
Fri Do not let anything worry you, but in every situation, by prayer with thanksgiving, let God know your desires.

25 Is 56:1-7
Sat The Lord says: Do what is right and act with justice, for my salvation is close at hand and my deliverance will soon be revealed.

26 Jn 6:57-63
SUN Jesus said: The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

27 Ws 1:1-3
Mon Seek God in simplicity of heart; for the Lord reveals himself to those who do not refuse him their trust.

28 Ps 94:14-23
Tue Your faithful love supports me, Lord. However great the anxiety of my heart, your consolation brings joy to the soul.

29 1 Th 3:12-13
Wed May God make your love increase so that it overflows for each other and for everyone. May God confirm your hearts.

30 Mk 9:30-37
Thu Jesus said: Whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.

31 Ps 62
Fri Trust in God at all times. Pour out your heart to God.

Spirit of the Risen Christ, comforting Spirit, Spirit of praise, your love for each one of us will never disappear.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

gned in peace with his neighbors (1 Kings 4:24), stored Israel will rule over its oppressors (Isaiah 2), and the Torah forbids people to exercise au- rity over their servants "with harshness" (Leviti- 25:43,46,53). So if, in Genesis 1, human beings called to rule over the animals, this simply means t, made in the image of the Creator, they become rt of "vice-regent." They are both part of creation l, at the same time, receive a special responsibility ards other creatures.

What is this responsibility? To answer this ques- n, we must examine how the role of the king was n in Israel. We must also distinguish between actual exercise of power by the sovereigns, often fairly and sometimes even harshly, and the ideal he king, presented for example in Psalm 72. The g should rule with justice and according to what ight (v. 2), with special care for the poorest: "he l take pity on the weak and the needy [and] will ue them from oppression and violence," (v. 13- . He will thus become a source of blessing for earth (v. 16-17). God gives to humans a respon- lity for creation that is essentially positive; they called promote the harmony of the whole. If we e in fact exercised this power by acting as tyrants her than as wise and just rulers, the fault is not be found in the divine command but in human dom which has gone astray.

The other word in this text, *kabash*, translated subdue" in English, does include a concept of ce. The noun *kebesh* means "footstool," and the ge is that of putting something under one's feet. ployed to refer to forced slavery, this verb is even d once with the meaning "to rape" (Esther 7:8). main meaning is to subdue hostile powers, by ce if necessary. This may indeed lead people to eve that the Bible gives humanity the right to loit the earth, but the true key to understanding text is found rather in those archaic myths that cribe the act of creation as a struggle against the otic powers of destruction, symbolized by the monsters Rahab (Psalm 89:9-11, Job 26:11-13) Leviathan (Psalm 74:13-15). In order for life to rish peacefully, the enemies of life must be kept er control. Even the righteous king of Psalm 72 alled to "crush the oppressor" (v. 4). Translated today's language, the vocation of "subduing the th" would mean "to cultivate and care for the cre- d world, to use the achievements of science and nology for the harmonious development of all tion." Such a vocation, the opposite of selfish loitation of the planet, remains quite relevant ay.

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

If we believe in eternal life, why be interested in the fate of our planet?

In the Gospel, we discover a hope, that of everlasting life. The Bible speaks this way to tell us that there is something beyond our earthly life; God's love is not limited to our existence here below. The author of the Letter to the Hebrews writes that we are "looking for a homeland," and aspire to "a better country, that is, a heavenly one" and not one on earth (Hebrews 11:14,16). Thus, through the life of Jesus, and especially by his resurrection, God invites us to a life beyond this life.

For this reason, an interest in the fate of the planet could seem secondary: is it not meaningless to seek to protect at all costs an environment that is here today gone tomorrow? One might even wonder whether devoting great efforts to taking care of the planet would not indicate a lack of hope in the life of eternity.... But conversely, not being concerned with this earth entrusted to us by God could seem to indicate a lack of respect for God's creative work. Some people, convinced that their life has no meaning, come to the point of no longer taking care of themselves and have self-destructive attitudes. The same thing could be said about a disoriented humanity which would have no more respect for the environment.

Thus, trusting in eternal life becomes instead a call to safeguard God's creation now. If God judges us worthy to be reunited with him forever, that undoubtedly shows that our life here on earth also has a priceless value, and with it the whole of creation in constant renewal, "groaning even now in the pains of childbirth" (Romans 8:22). Ongoing creation and eternal salvation are one and the same movement, that of a God who never ceases to manifest his love to all humanity.

Believing in eternal life thus cannot be inconsistent with a concern for the environment. Waiting for the afterlife promised by God in fact implies the respect for the here-and-now already given by him. He is the one who fills the whole universe: "the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below" (Joshua 2:11). Our presence in this world has meaning, and the hope of eternal life only makes this meaning still deeper. The Gospel calls us to love our neighbor, to the spirit of wonder: these are all reasons to take care of the created world. My behavior also has consequences for my brothers and sisters in humanity, and for future generations.

God's creation wishes to live, now and forever. As Albert Schweitzer said, "I am life that wants to live, surrounded by life that wants to live" (*Civilization and Ethics*, 1976). Eternal life is a promise that keeps us alert, a responsibility for the present day.

S. Grégoire de Nazianze

Music: Taizé © Ateliers et Presses de Taizé

You who are beyond all things, what mind can grasp you? All that lives celebrates you; the desire of all reaches out towards you.

laws of nature as the expression of God's will, since through them God has created everything that is, including humankind. Therefore, when we mistreat nature, we are also going against God's will. No artist, no creator wishes to see their work destroyed. So, in my opinion it is our duty, as Christians, to attempt to bring together once again humans and the rest of creation. The way I see it, God gave the Earth not for us to own it, but rather to take care of it.

Iko (Indonesia)

I am thinking about all those environmental issues. Unfortunately, the food whose production wounds the earth the most is usually cheaper. I obviously cannot afford eco-friendly produced fair-trade food all the time, but I can try not to waste what I buy, to separate my waste, or even to ask other people to consume in a responsible way as much as possible.

It is up to us to understand that the world which God created as something really good has become, over the centuries, something not good any more. This is because of us, because of how human beings treat the world. If we are Christians, if we want to live in solidarity with the whole creation, we have to make our contribution. Many people doing many small things can make a big difference.

Théophile (France)

With my friends who are also architecture students, at the University of Nancy, I spent a week reflecting on issues of sustainable development. A group went out to meet the gypsies, to find out what they needed in order to provide solutions for social improvements. Indeed, in many cases cities have great problems accepting them, and so they find themselves located far away from the city center, housed together in a single rudimentary place. Is this really what being a citizen means? My friends suggested reintegrating them into the urban network, in several different places, so that they are close to the infrastructure they need: hospitals, markets, schools.... They looked for different places where new insertion-points would be possible, and came up with a very practical plan. Architecture, and here urban planning, are also ways to build human solidarity, by forcing us to think about how to serve humanity by making the places where we live more hospitable.

Friedemann (Germany)

We are not called to deal responsibly with the earth and all creation primarily as Christians but as human beings, as children of one God of all people. My own commitment to the environment never came primarily from the Bible, but rather from my personal faith and my wonder at nature's bounty and beauty.

The biblical imperative to "dominate" the earth (Genesis 1:26,28), which for a long time I thought seemed cruel, has become much clearer. Indeed, the one who rules over us, God, is also the one who, "full of joy because of you, renews you in his love" (Zephaniah 3:17); he is the husband of his people (see Hosea 2); he "comforts his people" and "shows his affection" (Isaiah 49.13). So already in the First Testament, we get a positive and inspiring image of God as ruler.

With Jesus Christ, the Son of God comes into our world and, in many ways, overturns our image of God. By his life, his Passion and Resurrection, in his Gospel, he fulfilled the First Testament, which finds in him its full meaning. Where we would expect to see a Son of God in glory, he comes to earth as a child in a manger; he stands at the Jordan to be baptized, among those who await salvation; he eats with sinners and even on the Cross he is able to love and forgive.

In the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount, this spirit is present: "Blessed are you, the poor: the Kingdom of God is yours" (Luke 6:20). And he tells us: "Truly I say to you, whenever you did it to one of these least, who are my brothers and sisters, you did it for me!" (Matthew 25:40).

So when I consider the term "kingdom" in the way that God and Christ first lived it out, when I, as one who is to rule over nature, make myself quite small like a mustard seed, to which the kingdom of God is also compared (cf. Mark 4:30-34), I can put into action the call from Genesis with a clear conscience and I am even confirmed in my commitment by the first critical passage in the Bible: we are as "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20) not here to exploit the earth, but, through our unique position in creation, to be responsible for it. We need to take good care of it.

After we have received so much from creation, it is our turn to treat it as best we can. Perhaps, in this context, we might, with respect to creation, apply to ourselves the title of shepherd rather than of ruler.

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